

NEWS



LETTER

A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports,
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Judith Ozment, Librarian

No.17

Traine Scents and Wilde Goose Chases

THE ORIGINS OF STEEPLECHASING

by Alexander Mackay-Smith

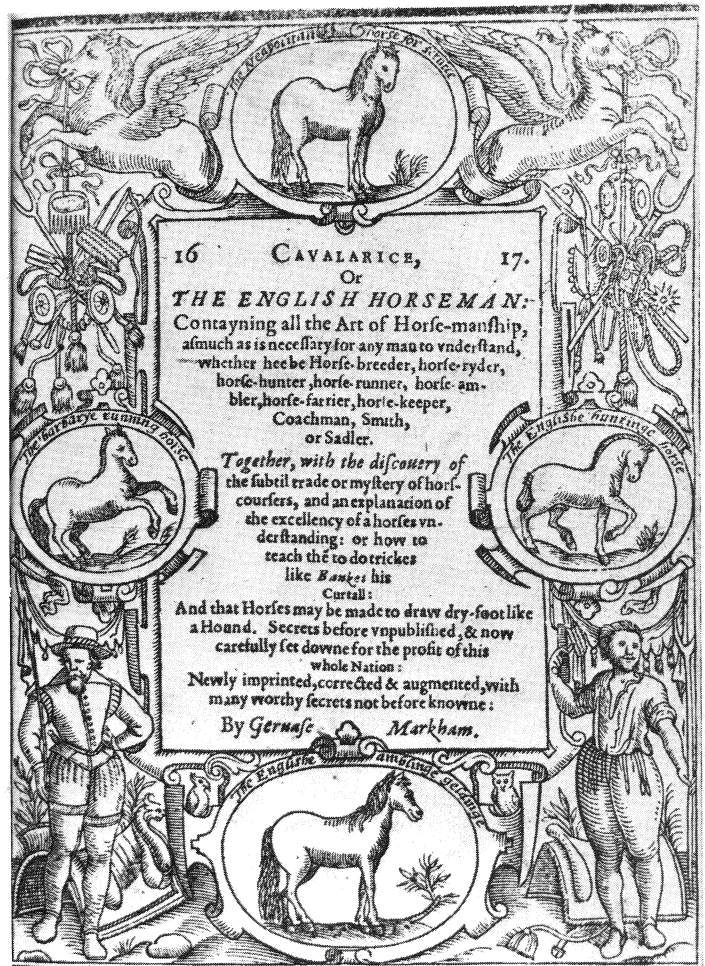
An important recent addition to the collections of The National Sporting Library is Gervase Markham's "Cavalatrice, or The English Horseman, Containing all the Art of Horsemanship, as much as is necessary for any man to understand, whether he be Horsebreeder, horserider, horse hunter, horse runner, horse ambler, horse farrier, horse keeper, Coachman, Smith or Sadler.", published in London, 1617. This is the second and enlarged edition of the book first published in 1607.

Gervase Markham (1568-1637) was the most prolific of all English writers on horses and horsemanship, with an equally unsurpassed record for continued popularity. His first book on horses, published in London 1593, was titled, "A Discourse of Horsemanshippe. Also the Manner to Chase, Trayne, Ryde and Dyet, both Hunting-horses, and Running-horses". This was the first classic on the training of racehorses. With different titles, all under Markham's name, it went through twenty-nine editions from 1593 to 1734. It was also reprinted in the first veterinary book printed in the American colonies at Wilmington, Delaware, in 1764.

As the title indicates, "Cavalatrice" covers many aspects of horses and horsemanship. The precepts which interests us most today are Markham's instructions about training racehorses.

Racing in the modern manner, on courses maintained solely for this purpose and provided with start and finish poles, railed in at least at the finish, first became popular during the reign of Charles II who was restored to the British throne in 1660. During the Elizabethan Era and under the Stuart kings, James I and Charles I, however, more popular forms of racing were known as Traine-scents and Wild Goose Chases. Both of these were between what Markham called "Hunting-horses"

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Title page of Gervase Markham's "Cavalatrice, or The English Horseman. . .", published in 1617

Traine Scents and Wilde Goose Chases

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whose principal education and conditioning had been accomplished in the hunting fields. This type of racing is set forth in the Third Book of Markham's work, the title page reading "Cavalarice, or That part of Art wherein is containd the choise, Trayning, and Dyeting of hunting Horses, whether it be for Pleasure or for Wager", this book having actually been printed in 1616.

Markham writes (p.13): "The world doth not afford in all pointes (both for thoroughnesse and swiftnesse, being joyned together) a better Horse than the true bred English horse for Hunting". He considers the English hunter superior to the cross of an English stallion or mare with the Neapolitian Courser, the Spanish Jennett or the Polander (Polish horse). He also records, here and elsewhere, that the British racehorse of that day was a runner, whose preferred intermediate gait for warming up and cooling out, was the pace, not the trot. He writes "after he hath drunk, you shall gallop him upon an easy false gallop for five or six score yards, and then give him winde, then gallop him as much more, then give him winde, then gallop him as much more, which when you have done, you shall pace him faire & softly home".

Markham believed that following hounds is essential to arouse the desire of horses to race. He writes (p.9) "Now for the following of Houndes, Horses even naturally have great delight both in their cry, and in their company, and will (as I have often noted) when they have heard the cry of Houndes by pricking upp their eares, gazing aloft, and forcing to runne or gallop, show the pleasure they take therein". To encourage a horse to race Markham advises: "Gallopping and labouring amongst othere horses, is such an incouragement and comfort chifely to a young horse, that he doth, as it were, forget his paine, and by seeing the labour of his companions; out of an ambition, incident to horses, covets many times to doe more than any reasonable horse-man would have him".



"Racing", a copper-plate engraving illustrating Volume II of "The Sportsman's Dictionary: or, the Country Gentleman's Companion, in all rural recreations", published in London 1735.

Markham describes the various quarries pursued by hounds, namely the otter, fox, badger, buck, stag and hare. He then describes as follows the two types of "Hunting-horse" racing, then popular, the first known as "Traine Scent" (p.9-10): "There is also another Chase (if I may without offense to term it) at least a sport I am sure it is; and that is when swift Houndes hunt a Catt, which is by some

Huntsman drawn in a long string three or four mile at the most up and down the Fields, either cross plowed landes, or through green fieldes, leaping Ditches, Hedges, or other Pales, Rayles, or Fences, or running through Waters, as the leader of the Catte shall thinke befit for the advantage of the Horse, for whose benefit he rideth.

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Traine Scents and Wilde Goose Chases

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“This chase or sport we here in England call a Traine sent, because the sent which the Houndes hunt is trained along the fields, according to the direction of the leader thereof, and not according to the will of the beast. This chase of all chases is the swiftest, because the sent thereof is hottest, so that the Hounds run it with all the power they have, making neither stoppe nor stay till they either overtake the traine; or else the man stay and go no further. In so much that, with the verie eagerness of the chase, and franticke running of the Hounds, bee they Dogges of never so free mouthes, yet they shall not be able to open or spend their mouthes, or if they doe open it will be veri seldome.”

The above, of course, is the early 17th century version of modern drag hunting. Today, instead of leading a live cat, it is customary to drag a bag scented with fox urine. Aniseed was also used to lay drag lines during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Train scents were laid, not only for match races, but also for training horses for the hunting field and for conditioning as race horses. Markham wrote (p.57): “I would have all gentlemen that would as well have good Horses as good Houndes, ever to keep two or three couple of Traine-sent dogges, the swiftest he can by any means attaine unto, and according as hee findes the strength of his Horse, for to trayne him once or twice a Weeke after them.”

The second type of popular “Hunting-horse” racing in this era, the Wilde Goose Chase, is described by Markham as follows (p. 11): “There is yet another chase which Horse-men call the Wilde goose chase, and it is never used but in matches only, where neither the hunting of the Hare, nor the running of traine sents is able to decide the doubt which Horse is the better. In this case Horse-men found out (for the avoyding of controversie) this chase, which is called Wildegoose chase, resembling the manner of the flight of Wilde-geese, which

for the most part flie ever one after another, keeping as it were an equall distance one from another; so in this chase, after the Horses are started, and have runne twelve score (yards), then which Horse can get the leading, the other is bound to follow whether soever he goes, and that too within a certaine distance, as within twice or thrice his length, or else to be beaten up by the ‘triers’ (judges) which ride by to see faire play, being gentlemen or other chosen for the purpose. And if either Horse get before the other twelve score yards, or according as the match is made, then the hinder Horse looseth the match. And if the Horse which came first ledde, then is hee likewise bound to follow, till he can either get before, or else the match be won and lost.”

Most of the contests under the above patterns were match races for a wager. Markham deplored this type of racing. he wrote (p. 57) “I have seen in them so much breach of friendship, so many jealousies, and so many deceits, insomuch that many times the better Horse comes from the field the greater loser. Yet many Gentlemen notwithstanding will make matches.”

Chapter 11 (p.55) is entitled “Making a Hunting match, the observations, and advantages.” In drawing up the “Articles” of a match, he advises that the owner insist on terms which will favor his own horse. First to be considered the matter of terrain, whether the horse’s abilities are adapted to flat, hilly, deep, smooth or rough going, and whether he can jump ditches, fences and other obstacles. The selection of the site of the match should be made accordingly. The temperament of the horse is also important. If difficult to control, he specifies a Train-scent. If on the other hand he is tractable and can manage sharp turns, a Wilde Goose chase is more suitable.

Chapter 13 is “Of the Riding of the Match and the Advantages in Riding”. As for train-scent, he advises the rider to sit “firme in your saddle, with neither moving or jogging true and fro therein.” He deplores the practice of standing up straight upon the “stirrop-leathers.” He says, “a Horseman should not let his spurre nor leg touch his horse; when he will either correct or helpe his horse.” He

advises that the arms should be carried close to the body: “let them lie loose up and downe.” He also advises sparing use of the whip: “one blow shall doe more good then twenty”. Finally, “first helpe him with the calves of your legs, and when toyle and wearines make him careless of them, then you shall adde the stroake of your spurres.”

The manner of riding a Wilde Goose chase is more complicated. Markham writes: “Now when you have ridden all your Traine-sents according unto your match, and that you are come to run the Wilde goosechase, you shall understand that in riding of it, there are divers observations very necessary, which cannot be used in any of the former sents, namely: when you first start the Wilde goosechase, and have gotten the leading, if then as you are running unto such groundes as shall be most for your advantage; as unto deepe and foul earths, if your horse be strong and rough; or unto fair skelpe groundes if your horse be swift and of fierce metal. That then, if your adversary have the better wind, and upon speed come and offer to take the leading from you, you shall then suffer him to bring his horse head within your horses flanke, and then look on which hand he commeth. As if he come upon your right hand, you shall then clappe your bridle hand in a little straighter, hurl your horse roundly about upon your left hand. This is caled a slippe, and with this slippe you shall make your adversaries horse overshoot you at least three or four yards, and, as often as he strives thus, to take the leading you; so oft give him these slippes, till either you come into such ground as is fit for your purpose, or else your adversary leave striving against you. It is exceeding good also in this case, when your adversary strives to take the leading from you; if then (having ground fit for your purpose, as either ditch, hedge, or such like) you runne your horse as though you would leap over the hedge or ditch, and observe that your adversary runne very fast, and very near you. Then when you come even to the brim of the ditch, you shall hurl your horse suddenly upon that side which is from your adversary, and to runne away, and neither leape the hedge nor ditch; by means whereof it is great

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JANUS

A. Mackay-Smith

The sprinter strains in the bloodlines of the American Thoroughbred are the world's prime source of racing speed. A chestnut stallion, Janus, foaled 1746, first raced and probably bred by Anthony Langley Swymer of Hampshire, and imported from England in 1756 by Mordecai Booth of Yorktown, Virginia, is the fountain-head of these strains. Bred to be a sire of distance racers, Janus spent four years each at stud in England and Virginia. His pedigree, seven eighths oriental, included the Godolphin, Darley and Leedes Arabians. Janus's offspring showed little ability to win four mile races, the standard distance in England and in northern Virginia. Fortunately, in 1761 Janus was purchased from his importer and sent to John Willis of Beddingfield Hall in Brunswick County, southside Virginia.

During the seventeenth century, the colonists had developed match racing, on two quarter-mile parallel paths, developing, by selection based on performance, the Quarter Race Horse, the first American breed. Although quarter racing had declined in popularity north of the James River by 1761, it continued unabated in southern Virginia and adjacent North Carolina counties.

The offspring of Janus, out of Quarter Horse and Thoroughbred mares, dis-

played extraordinary short distance speed in the quarter races in this region. Both in conformation and in performance Janus and his offspring reverted to his unidentified tail female great grand-dam and her ancestors, the sprinter type English and Irish racing Hobbies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Demonstrating consistent ability to sire horses of blazing short speed, Janus became the most important stallion in co-

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OLD JANUS

IS now very fat, and as active as a Lamb, and stands at *Northampton Courthouse, North Carolina*, in Order to cover Mares at forty Shillings a Leap, or four Pounds the Season. The Pasturage, which is under a very good Fence, will be allowed gratis, but I will not be liable for any Mare that may be stolen or get away accidentally. Any Gentleman who thinks proper to send a Servant to see the Mares have Justice done in covering, and feeding with Corn at twelve Shillings and Sixpence a Barrel, shall be accommodated gratis. (I||) J. ATHERTON.

Traine Scents and Wilde Goose Chases

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oddes, but your adversary comming fast after you, and being unprepared, can neither will not choose but either leap the ditch, or runne into the ditch. Then if he doe leap it, he must also leap it back again; which double toile and double ground running, will soon bring a horse to faintness."

The final chapter, is headed "The Tryers office, and the advantages they must observe." The Tryers or Judges followed these races throughout on horseback. Markham recommends, "These gentleman that are well experienced in Hunting matches, and are both good Horseman, good Hunt-men, and light burthens, for they ought to ride by the match-horses all the day long, to direct and control the Ryders, if at any time they ride contrary to the Articles. To which end they are to have divers fresh Horses provided them; then when one fails they may take another."

Markham notes that the Tryers must first read the Articles to the contending

parties, to make sure that the drag is laid over the terrain and for the distance agreed upon. If there are "leaps" to be taken, the Tryers must see to it that both horses jump the same place. Both horses must follow the drag as laid - shortcuts are not permissible.

Ordinarily two or three Trains or heats would be run during the course of a race. Half an hour was customarily allowed to cool out and freshen the horses for the next Train.

Even in those far off days there was a drug problem! It was "unlawfull" for any man to "put his hand in his horse's mouth — to have his hands anointed with any comfortable oyles or confections."

In judging a Wild Goose chase, the Tryers were to guard against any bystander galloping his horse in front of a contestant so as to give him a lead. Tryers were to make sure that mounted spectators did not get in the way of the two competitors. Finally, it was their duty to stop the match if a "horse is faint, neither is he

able to indure."

Markham's fourth book is "Cavalatrice, or The Tracconer, Countayning the Art and Secrets which belong to Ambling Horses, and how that pace is to be taught to any Horse whatsoever". The fifth book "The part of Art which containeth the office of the Keeper, Groome of the Stable, or Coach-man, how Horses shall be ordered both when they rest and when they journey: With all things belonging to their places". The sixth book is "Cavalatrice, or The Currier. Containing the Art, knowledge, and dyet of the running Horse, either in trayning up, or in any great match or wager." The part of this book dealing with the training of running horses covers fifty pages as compared to eighty-four pages for the training of hunting horses.

Train sents and Wild Goosechases are, in point of fact, the ancestors of modern steeplechasing. Then, as now, they had their roots in the hunting field.

THE NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY

1983 REPORT

In the inaugural issue of the National Sporting Library Newsletter published September 1975, Alexander Mackay-Smith, Curator, said, "No one can really understand a nation without a knowledge of the way it spends its leisure time. By far the greater part of our leisure is devoted to sport, either as participants or as spectators. Our greatest spectator sport is horse racing which leads all other sports in paid admissions. Racing supports its own periodicals, while leisure time magazines are devoted to shooting and fishing, which with foxhunting (and beagling), constitute the trio known as Field Sports. Turf and Field Sports are the province of the National Sporting Library, the only public library in this country devoted solely to sport."

The Library's purpose then, as now, is stated on its masthead — "A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports, their History and Social Significance". Since its founding in 1954 the Library has received the support of numerous individuals, who by their gifts of entire collections and single volumes, manuscripts, scrapbooks, periodicals, ephemera and money have contributed to the library's growth, from an initial collection of 6,000 volumes to 11,000 volumes in 1983. During the past year, 486 books and related items were cataloged and added to the collection.

Major donations in 1983 consist of a large collection of hunting, steeplechasing and racing photographs given by Marshall Hawkins; from film-maker Tom Davenport, 5 hours of "out-takes" with accompanying notes of foxhunting, steeplechasing and point-to-point film; 151 black and white glossy prints used as illustrations in "The American Foxhound" given by A. Mackay-Smith; 7 large scrapbooks of photographs, reproductions and illustrations collected by Lida Fleitmann Bloodgood for her book "The Horse in Art"; 2 paintings of "The Langley Hunters" by Frank Voss were given as a bequest of the late Eleanor Langley Fletcher; Charles Mackall Jr. gave sport-

ing books belonging to his late uncle, Lester Karow, a founding member and originator of the Library. The Library received from John Daniels the unpublished manuscript "Foxhounds - Their Management and Hunting in America" by A. Henry Higginson, written in 1911, and The Chronicle of the Horse presented 36 new books which they had received for review. The Library welcomes all donations and is grateful for the continuing support of its members.

Several important and rare volumes have been purchased by the Library. Notable additions are: Markham's "Cavalariace", described in this issue of the Newsletter; "Carriages and Coaches/History and Evolution" by Ralph Straus, published 1912; "The Gentleman's Pocket Farrier" by Tuffnell, published 1833 in Boston; the 1735 1st edition "The Sportsman's Dictionary"; H. W. Herbert's "Frank Forester's Fugitive Sporting Sketches" and the bibliography of Herbert's published work; and 8 volumes of "The British Racehorse" published 1949-1955 which will fill gaps in the NSL set.

The library's resources were used during the past year for a wide range of research projects. Students, scholars and sport history hobbyists utilize the collection. Authors, artists and professionals in other fields turn to the library in increasing numbers. Lawyers researching equine law and horse management have called the library with specific questions or have visited to conduct onsite research. Staff members from various periodicals and newspapers use the library to check references and to gather background material; the history of polo in the U.S., the definitive book on the American woodcock, a history of women in sport in this country, the history of the National Horse Show, a biographical dictionary of people and horses famous in American sport, the history of the (Warrenton) Virginia Gold Cup, and a bibliography of horse books. The editorial staff of The Chronicle of the Horse and its Curator, A. Mackay-Smith, use the library's collection extensively for

references and resource material for their articles and publications.

The guestbook also records approximately 50 visitors last year on a "drop in" basis. Several visitors have responded to our invitation and become members. Inquiries about the library were also generated by brief announcements published in Spur, The Chronicle of the Horse and Blue Rider Books. Several libraries have requested copies of back issues of the Newsletter for their files and collections.

Lynne Dole has nearly finished indexing the proper names of people in the "American Turf Register and Sporting Magazine" and is now working on the names of horses. Last year she indexed five volumes of about 670 pages each for the names of people and subject matter. This monumental project, when completed, will be of lasting importance to researchers in the history of early American sport. Work has begun on indexing "The American Farmer" for similar items.

In retrospect, the Library has come a long way since its founding. This growth is due to the interest and support of its members, directors, curator and staff. We look forward eagerly to the challenge of continuing along the course set thirty years ago.

Judith Ozment, Librarian

JANUS

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lonial America, serving from 1756 until his death during the winter of 1780-1781 at the stables of Col. Herbert Haynes in Warren County, North Carolina. The American Quarter Horse Association, which has registered over two million horses since 1941, recognizes Janus as its foundation sire. Of equal importance, Janus is the prime source of speed strains in American Thoroughbred racing, from six furlongs to a mile and half. There is hardly a Quarter Horse or a Thoroughbred whose remote pedigree does not contain a cross of Janus.

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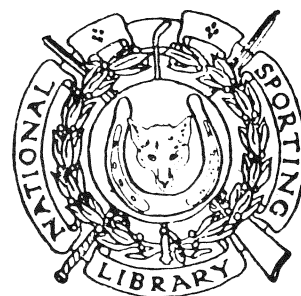
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